RACIAL THEMES MARK NEW STORIES LONG AND SHORT

The Scene Shifts Around the World

THE BEST SHORT STORIES OF 1920. Edited by Edward J. O'Brien. Small, Maynard & Co.

Reviewed by ELEANOR HAYDEN.

Again Mr. O'Brien offers to the public the twenty short stories published during the current year in American magazines that particularly please his taste and that most nearly come up to his tests of substance and form. In his introduction the editor deplores the commercialization of the American magazines that tends to standardise the output of young authors by insisting that they repeat the note that first pleased the public taste until all the original meaning of the note has been lost. Mr. O'Brien suggests that from the modern American short stories is being built up the first national literature that is not founded on one racial feeling but many racial feelings; that impersonal creation is taking the place of hack work and that a sincere criticism of life is being offered in stories of inherent vitality artistically presented.

From this sympathetic introduction one turns to the contents of the book, and what does one find? The first story in the book, entitled "The Other Woman," is by Sherwood Anderson, to whom the volume is dedicated. This rather unpleasant tale concerns a man who seeks reality with the wife of a tobacconist the night before his marriage. Said one critic, "I think there are some people who should leave marriage alone, and that man is one of them." Said another, "Why should Mr. O'Brien consider that the best short story? It may be true to life, but it isn't even interesting."

What else does one find in the volume? A vivid tale by Konrad Bercovici told of Ghitza, an ancient hero of a wandering gypsy tribe, who jumped into the chill waters of the Danube rather than betray his village; a story by Edna Clare Bryner called "The Life of Five Points," in which a sort of Spoon River realism is attempted; "The Signal Tower," by Wadsworth Camp, a sensational plot of a switchman in a lonely railroad tower with the problem before him of leaving his job to protect his wife from a drunken man or staying on his job, switching the "express" and the "special" to avoid a smash. One slides through the book. There is a story by Katherine Fullerton Gerould, entitled "Habakkuk," that seems like an oasis in a sandy place, a bit of real style and subtlety in a desert arid of such pleasant things. There is a pseudo-profound Rupert Hughes story of the Mississippi, with the kind of philosophy in it that seems to insure Mr. Hughes's popularity.

Grace Sartwell Mason has written a really good response to the women who prate about men's jobs being so easy and so interesting—men's "having the best of it" and only doing what they like. Mrs. Mason scorns such twaddle in conversation, and shows how one man in "His Job" had to work for his success and was willing to sacrifice the pleasant immediate for the future that he wanted to build. In "The Rending" James Oppenheim repeats the strain that Anzia Yezierska utilized so adequately in "The Fat of the Land" (In the 1919 volume of short stories). Mr. Oppenheim gives another version of the breaking away from the old tradition by the oncoming generation, but a version in which the power of Miss Yezierska is strangely diluted. In "The Rotter" Fleta Campbell Springer writes of an Englishman returned from India to die and his pleasant revival of a friendship with the wife of an old comrade, a woman who is realizing her loneliness for the first time as her daughter, for whom she has lived, is about to join the ranks of the successfully married. Mr. O'Brien has a penchant for the story of the Englishman. One extremely interesting one lingers in the memory from another volume, a story told at a formal dinner of an Englishman who discovered in the wilds of Canada the woman he loved and the man she married—a tale with more than a touch of the vital creative spark.

In the present volume Edith Storm has a story entitled "The Three Telegrams" that seems to endeavor to express for France what Margaret Prescott Montague's "From England to America" expressed of the spirit of Great Britain. The Storm story has a taint of woman's magazine sentimentality that Miss Montague's episode beautifully lacked. There are two psychological adventures also in this volume, one by John T. Wheelwright called "The Roman Bath," an adventure in the London of David Copperfield and Mr. Pickwick; the other by Stephen French Whitman, entitled "Amazement," a jump into the Florence of the sixteenth century. "Sheener," the story by Ben Ames Williams of the loyal little Jewish newsboy who scented the gentleman in a down-and-out Englishman, befriended him, only to be snubbed by the same gentleman when he "came back" a bit, is very keen narrative. Stories by Frances Gilchrist Wood, Wilbur Daniel Steele, Rose Sidney, Arthur Somers Roche, Lee Foster Hartman, Helen Coale Crew and Edwina Stanton Babcock complete the collection.

As a comment we might quote one of Mr. Hughes's small boys looking at the dawn and saying explosively, "Gosh, what do you want for 10 cents?" What does one want for 10 cents? Perhaps if one did not read Mr. O'Brien's introduction, his words about creation, criticism of life, the birth of a new type of national literature and all the rest, one would not reach the last page of his volume with such a feeling of flatness. Perhaps it is not fair to compare craftsmen with artists like Mrs. Gerould, Mrs. Sedgwick, H. G. Dwight—to mention products Mr. O'Brien classes as American—nor to contrast the output of American magazines for a year with the work of such younger European writers, for instance, as Seumas O'Kelly of "The Golden Barque," Thomas Burke of "Nights in London" and various Continental writers. For 10 cents one does not expect the artistry of a Leonard Merrick nor the driving power of a Chekhov, but, having known what short stories might be, one wonders why our "new national literature," as exemplified by the magazine short stories, continues, year after year, to fall short.

One remembers two stories published in the *Atlantic* many, many months ago, "Seth Miles and the Sacred Fire" and "The Knight's Move." Will any of the 1920 narratives linger in the memory as did those two stories? Out of our rich national background when shall we begin to create short stories that are as vital, as original, as expressive of a national and human interpretation of life as the poetry of Sandburg, Edgar Lee Masters and Frost; of plays like "Beyond the Horizon" and "The Emperor Jones;" novels like "The Age of Innocence," and the criticisms of Huneker and Randolph Bourne?

Has the commercialized magazine, with its standardized product, paralyzed the imaginative power of the creators of the American short story so completely that only accepted artists like Mrs. Sedgwick and Mrs. Gerould dare to betray anything as literary as a fluid, beautiful style? What is the influence at work among the short story writers that has had the effect upon their work of what Mr. O'Brien calls "numbling silence"?

Three of the twenty authors chosen by Edward O'Brien as representative of 1920's best in the short story field. They are Sherwood Anderson, Fleta Campbell Springer, Wilbur Daniel Steele.

The Tentacles of Empire

SEED OF THE SUN. By Wallace Irwin. George H. Doran Company.

Reviewed by PIERRE LORING.

While the California land question is being discussed in more or less abstract terms in the news columns, Wallace Irwin has been busy investigating the problem from the human angle. The fruits of his research are arrestingly given in his latest novel, "The Seed of the Sun." Politicians and theorists may canvass the Japanese question back and forth endlessly and offer no light to the curious layman. Mr. Irwin, on the other hand, seems to say: "Go to California, the Golden State, settle on the land as a farmer, work your farm yourself and see what happens."

This is precisely what Anna Bly, the heroine of "Seed of the Sun," does. She nurses no groundless or blind prejudice against the Japanese. She is, in fact, genially disposed to the little brown men of Nippon because her father had lived in Japan many years and among his closest friends he numbered several Japanese of high station, among them Baron Tazumi, who acts as a sort of spiritual adviser to Anna herself. With her younger sister, Zudie, she decides to work the old Bly farm herself. Accompanied by her two children, her sister and a wise old Irish nurse, she leaves New York for the west coast. She takes the affairs of the farm in hand and thus brusquely collides with the vexed Japanese question.

The Bly farm is located in a thickly populated Japanese corner of the State and naturally her farm hands are exclusively drawn from that race. Her overseer and partner, a Mr. Shimba, attends to the details for her, and, superficially at least, he appears to be industrious in her behalf. But at the crucial moment during the prune harvest Mr. Shimba forsakes her; the workers in the field go out on a mysterious strike and the prunes, upon which she has relied so much to pay the overhead of improvements, are left to rot, ungathered, where they have fallen. An American neighbor and quondam engineer by the name of Dunc Leacy rescues her from her pitiful impasse just when, wearied out in body and soul, she drops exhausted in the effort to save the harvest herself.

What is the explanation of the sudden Japanese walkout? Mr. Irwin answers boldly, mincing no words: It is the racial solidarity of the Japanese colonists in California, backed by the Imperial Government, who are determined to buy up as much land as possible and so drive the American farmers out. The velvet scheming and subtle imperialism of the Japanese societies operating in California are vividly alleged. Lacking proof of the contrary, accepting the racial solidarity of the Japanese as practically axiomatic, many readers will take Mr. Irwin at his word. In the interest of truth, however, it should be pointed out that Mr. Irwin writes from the colored viewpoint of the native Californian in whose thigh the Japanese colonists are as prickly thorns.

To be sure, this does not render nugatory Mr. Irwin's main theme, that the little brown men of the Far East, short legged and flat lidded, are crowding out the American farmer. That there is a concerted plan on foot to colonize California for the Imperial Government has not yet been proved, and the searching reader will require more convincing facts before he is won over to this viewpoint. Mr. Irwin's evident bias wars against his thesis and certainly does not work for harmonious relations between this country and Japan. It is clear that a too insolent Chauvinism on the American side is just as inimical to world peace as the hypocritical imperialism of Japan; the one surlily opposed to the other is bound sooner or later to deepen misunderstanding and foment harsh feeling which must finally break out into open conflict. Having outlined the menace so dramatically, Mr. Irwin leaves us where we started, with no healing solution visible. Perhaps as a novelist he held this to be rather outside his field; but having seized on a theme which is so vital to America, after treating it in such a forthright and realistic manner, he is, I believe, in duty bound to suggest a possible remedy for the evil which looms so huge in his mind.

Yes, Mr. Irwin, when he is dealing with the facts which serve as a springboard for his story, is essentially a realist. It is plain that he is at close grips with the palpitating evidence. This lends unusual conviction to his case. He does not scruple to burst certain widely accepted bubbles. For instance, of the Japanese as a worker Dunc Leacy, who is unquestionably the author's mouthpiece, has this to say:

"The Jap is a one horse farmer; the American is a thousand horse farmer. Our imagination takes in the whole landscape, while a Jap gets down on his haunches and rubs a dinky piece of dirt between his hands. The superstition has gone round that every Jap has the brain of Harriman and the body of a toy Hercules. Bunk! The trouble with the Japs is just this: They're lacking in stamina. . . . The Japs can't compete with Portuguese or Hindus at grass cutting, because they haven't got the physical strength. They're best at dainty little jobs like picking fruit or paddling round the rice plantations. If you'll ask me the real reason why Japanese wives work with their husbands in the fields, I'll tell you it's because the men aren't a minute stronger than the women."

As a novel, it will be observed, "Seed of the Sun" falls between the two stools of art and politics. As a book, however, it is beyond doubt one of the most arresting contributions in popular form to the California land question.

Bolshevism and The North Pole

THE ICE PILOT. By Henry Leverage. Doubleday, Page & Co.

The Bolshevik menace is reaching the North Pole. It adds a thrill to the story of "The Ice Pilot." However, it is an unnecessary thrill. It is almost adding insult to injury to add Bolsheviks to the peril which the hero has surmounted.

Horace Sterling was renowned as a pilot. No one could guide a boat among the floes and icebergs better than he. For this reason he was sought after by a group of men who were not satisfied with the legitimate profits of whaling. Through a very clever device he was shanghaied aboard a luxurious yacht which was sailing to poach seals. The hero refused to lend his aid to defraud the Government. The captain became angry with him when he managed to warn a revenue cutter and he was locked up. He was befriended by a mysterious girl who happened to be aboard. Finally the ship came to an anchor in northern Russia. And then the Bolsheviks came aboard and massacred most of the crew to obtain the ship. Horace Sterling escaped and because of his knowledge of these regions he piloted the ship through the Northeast Passage. Of course when he came to Greenland he married the heroine.

Mr. Leverage knows the life of the whaler. The earlier portions of the book are fully as good as Jack London's yarns. The end is so melodramatic that he might as well have gone a bit further. The hero needed help to get the boat through the passage, but instead of lugging Bolsheviks in he might have captured some polar bears a la Tarzan and taught them to steer the ship.

"Signorina Capuletta" in America

AN INNOCENT ADVENTURESS. By Mary Hastings Bradley. D. Appleton & Co.

Reviewed by SUSAN STEELL.

Where fiction is sold by bulk "The Innocent Adventuress" will not win much favor, but in the minds of persons who do not first turn to see if the last page of a book is numbered 700 this condensed, modern story will be accorded a genuine welcome. It is not too brief to be truthful and to contain character studies easily recognized as being drawn from life.

The little heroine is so pretty that she has no trouble at all in winning our love; even were she not quite so innocent in her search for a husband, a rich one to whom a *dot* would not be essential, we should be prepared to forgive her. She is the third daughter of an impoverished Roman family and her mother was born in America. Therefore, when it becomes difficult to find an eligible *parti* for Juliette, her elder sister, who was born to be a happy wife and mother, but was plain of feature, the parents devise a plan of sending their beautiful daughter to pass a season with relatives in America. Two things might come of this, improvement of poor, plain Juliette's matrimonial chance and a possible American husband for Maria.

That first night in New York with her mother's cousins stirred the blood and the imagination of the little "Wop," as her relatives and their set begin at once to call her. It preludes, too, a romance, for in a clever young playwright who had failed to "get over" because he put too much Harvard in his dramas little Maria sees the hero of her dreams. She dances with him once in the big public dining room—it sounds like Delmonico's—removing her hat as she did so. That once was enough. She falls in love as quickly as the lady in Shakespeare and the Veronese ballad, the Signorina Capuletta.

Unhappily the American representative of Romeo, although admiring, is not at the time heart whole, and, as the claim of propinquity is not enforced, he and Maria part as if never to meet again.

They do meet in the Adirondack wilds under extraordinary circumstances, and the end is happiness for both, otherwise we should never be able to forgive the author. Seldom has a sharper eye fallen on young America as it exists in the youth and maiden of to-day than the one Mrs. Bradley turns on the group who play tennis, golf, dance and flirt in the mountains.

What a contrast between their manners and those of the little "Wop," who has been brought up in the rigid foreign school of propriety! When pretty Maria and one of her admirers are accidentally lost on Bald Mountain and are forced to spend the night in the open the Italian sees no other way out but that of marriage. But the boy is "one of the Byrds of Long Island," who has spent his non-age avoiding the net of the fowler, and he very brutally informs the poor, bewildered child that she is "nutty." From his protection, which does not protect, she rushes down the mountain and into the very arms of—well, guess!

Books of the Week

Fiction.

JACOB'S LADDER—By E. Phillips Oppenheim. Little, Brown.
MASTERPIECES OF ADVENTURE—Edited by Neila Braddy. Four volumes. Doubleday, Page.
WORLD WITHOUT END—By Grant Overton. Doubleday, Page.
THE ROOF TREE—By Charles Neville Buck. Doubleday, Page.
THE FEAST OF LANTERNS—By Louise Jordan Miln. Stokes.
THE SEVENTH ANGEL—By Alexander Black. Harper.
THE FILM MYSTERY—By Arthur B. Reeve. Harper.
THE FRIEND OF THE FAMILY—By Fyodor Dostoevsky. Macmillan.
SPRING SHALL PLANT—By Beatrice Harraden. Doran.
A RECKLESS PURITAN—By Mrs. Victor Rickard. Doran.
IMPRUDENCE—By F. E. Mills Young. Doran.
THE MAGICIAN—By W. Somerset Maugham. Doran.
THE GREY ROOM—By Eden Phillpotts. Macmillan.
THE PRODIGAL FATHER—By George S. Bearden. Stratford.
THE CROOKED HOUSE—By Brandon Fleming. Clode.
FIGURES OF EARTH—By James Branch Cabell. McBride.
THE MAN IN THE JURY BOX—By Robert Orr Chipperfield. McBride.
HARLEQUINADE—By Holloway Horn. Stokes.
THE PURPLE MASK—By Louise Jordan Miln. Stokes.

Drama.

KING LEAR'S WIFE AND OTHER PLAYS—By Gordon Bottomley. Small, Maynard.

Verse.

CACTUS CENTER—By Arthur Chapman. Houghton Mifflin.
BREAKERS AND GRANITE—By John Gould Fletcher. Macmillan.
THE SECRET ROSE GARDEN OF SA'D UD MAHMUD SHABISTARI—Rendered from the Persian, with introduction by Florence Lederer. Dutton.
INSIDE THE GREAT CONFLICT—By Stephen S. Parfenoff. Stratford.

Biography and Reminiscences.

MY CANADIAN MEMORIES—By S. MacNaughton. Dutton.
CHESTNUTS AND SMALL BEER—By H. J. Jennings. Dutton.
A LAST DIARY—By W. N. P. Barbellion. Doran.
RECOLLECTIONS OF A FOREIGN MINISTER; MEMORIES OF ALEXANDER ISWOLSKY—Translated by Charles Louis Seeger. Doubleday, Page.
THE MEMOIRS OF ISMAIL KEMAL BEY—Edited by Sommerville Story. Dutton.
REMINISCENCES OF A STOWAWAY: A CAREER OF ADVENTURE—By C. E. Gouldsbury. Dutton.

Essays.

LIFE AND LETTERS—By J. C. Squire. Doran.
THE ESSENTIALS OF MYSTICISM AND OTHER ESSAYS—By Evelyn Underhill. Dutton.
HOW TO WRITE AN ESSAY: WITH SAMPLE ESSAYS AND SUBJECTS FOR ESSAYS—By W. T. Webb. Dutton.
EARLY TUDOR POETRY: 1485-1547—By John M. Berdan. Macmillan.

History and Public Affairs.

TALES OF ÆGEAN INTRIGUE—By J. C. Lawson. Dutton.
WAR TIME STRIKES AND THEIR ADJUSTMENT—By Alexander M. Bing. Dutton.
THE MYTH OF THE JEWISH MENACE IN WORLD AFFAIRS, OR THE TRUTH ABOUT THE FORGED PROTOCOLS OF THE ELDERS OF ZION—By Lucien Wolf. Macmillan.
THE STATE AND GOVERNMENT—By James Quayle Dealey. Appleton.

Religion.

THE PATHWAY OF LIFE THROUGH CREATION—By Silas M. Field. Stratford.

Writers and Writing.

EDGAR ALLAN POE: HOW TO KNOW HIM—By C. Alphonso Smith. Bobbs-Merrill.
RALPH WALDO EMERSON: HOW TO KNOW HIM—By Samuel McChord Crothers. Bobbs-Merrill.
APPRECIATIONS AND CRITICISMS OF THE WORKS OF CHARLES DICKENS—By Gilbert K. Chesterton. Dutton.

Health.

WHY DIE SO YOUNG?—By John B. Huber. Harper.

Science.

BRITAIN'S HERITAGE OF SCIENCE—By Arthur Schuster and Arthur E. Shipley. Second edition. Dutton.
NATURAL HISTORY STUDIES—By J. Arthur Thomson. Holt.

Miscellaneous.

THE VEGETABLE GARDEN—By W. Robinson. Dutton.
A TREATISE ON AIRSCREWS—By Whyrill E. Park. Dutton.
MODERN MARINE ENGINEERING: PART I, THE FIRE ROOM—By Harry G. Cisin. D. Van Nostrand.
THE ART OF LAWN TENNIS—By W. T. Tilden 2d. Doran.
ENTERTAINING THE AMERICAN ARMY—By James W. Evans and Gardner L. Harding. Association Press.
MAGIC IN NAMES—By Edward Clodd. Dutton.
THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD—By W. H. F. Basevi. Dutton.
THE COMPLETE AIRMAN—By G. C. Bailey. Dutton.
THE INTELLECTUALS—By Mary Dixon Thayer. Dorrance.
THE PROBLEMS OF MEDIUMSHIP—By Allessandro Zymonidas. Dutton.

"I Do Not Like Seriousness"---G. K. Chesterton

THE USES OF DIVERSITY. A BOOK OF ESSAYS. By G. K. Chesterton. Dodd, Mead & Co.

One of the pleasant and comfortable things in Mr. Chesterton's equipment is his carrying capacity for millions of words with kernels in them. He swallows them, apparently, in a dried condition, and allows them to swell up inside of him, and they presently reappear with a widely different content and specific gravity from anything perceptible in them when he spooned them out of the product of writers more determined than he to say what they had to say and be over with it. Whether they came from the rocky depths of Chaucer's old Stilton or from the custards and curries of the modern novelists, by the time Mr. Chesterton expels them they have acquired a distinctive quality, as unmistakable as that scent of chyre which always hung round the adventuress, or as the first few bars of "Annie Laurie." You like them, particularly, because they are all old friends whom you have seen before, and you like them all the better for the subtle something which they have picked up during their sojourn with Mr. Chesterton.

One of the ungenerous things which people used to say about this fluent and amiable writer is that he wrote paradoxes—wrote them to death, and had no mercy. Possibly he has done so, once or twice, when his smoke began to pour out of the bottle which his publisher, as reckless as the Arabian fisherman, had uncorked, but it seems more likely that the trouble was with the wits of his readers rather than with the fumes from Mr. Chesterton, which are never acrid, after all, and often fragrant and beguiling. The public "ear" has become more familiar with his key, nowadays, and his remarks are understood more fairly as the spontaneous expression of a whimsical devouring and assimilation of the thousand perfectly serious concerns of the world. He writes as he does because it is as natural for him to write that way as it was natural for Matthew Arnold or Anthony Trollope, say, to write as they did. He should never be blamed for it; on the contrary, he should be thanked for pointing out to more stolid thinkers the way to escape the sad consequences of their own thinking.

The title of his new volume, called "The Uses of Diversity," is an instance of his whimsicality in handling syllables; with a slight twist of his wits he tempts the reader to jump to the conclusion that all is not lost, and that diversity, well managed, may be as useful as the word which Shakespeare happened to use, may smell as sweet and blossom as luxuriantly in the dust he raises about it.

Of course, nothing is more arbitrary than a book-title; like Cassio's purse, it is something, nothing; the main thing is to get a title which the public can remember long enough to identify the book. Mr. Chesterton, however, knows perfectly well that his public never frets about titles, but simply asks, in the bookstore, for "the last thing" he has done. This, indeed, is one of the uses of a diversity of talent, though you may be sure he hasn't said anything about it in the book, which contains a great heap of his wit and good humor, arranged under thirty or forty headlines.

Why shouldn't it be possible for so able a writer as Mr. Chesterton, even though he may not be wholly able to repress a shudder at being "billed" as a "humorist" on his present lecture tour, to rest without resentment under the classification of a "good-humorist"? He is distinctly that, and it is one of his many saving graces. For a man who writes so much as he does comes to stand in need of some sort of saving graces, after all; because much speaking leads to inattentive ears, after a while, unless the talk is always such as the hearer feels he can't afford to miss; and no philosopher can hope to keep his stool in the grove unless he keeps his hearers from fretting about what time it is.

Mr. Chesterton knows all about this, and blurts out part of it in the first sentence in the book: "I do not like seriousness. I think it is irreligious. . . . The man who takes everything seriously is the man who makes an idol of everything," and so on; he deprecates the solemn ass even more than the silly one, as a worse example to youth, which he undoubtedly is. He detests stupidity; but if his broad tolerance had stomach even for that vicious defect in humanity he would be rather more than human, for his own keen wit goes through pretence with a blue flash which the victim may see, though he cannot feel the thrust which destroys.

But to dilate upon the quality of Mr. Chesterton's talent is as superfluous as to give three cheers for the multiplication table. His admirers will find many plums in the pudding which now smokes under their quivering nostrils. Possibly some of them will think there is nothing better in the book than these observations in his "Thoughts on Christmas":

"I have always held that Peter Pan was wrong. . . . His mistake is the mistake of the new theory of life. I might call it Peter Pantheism. It is the notion that there is no advantage in striking root. . . . One of the things that strike root is Christmas; and another is middle age. . . . All the same, the children ought to think of the Never Never Land, the world that is outside. But we [adults] ought to think of the Ever Ever Land—the world which is inside, and the world which will last."